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WAR OF 1812.

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E. CRUIKSHANK,
OF FORT ERIE, ONTARIO.

(From the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1905, pages 321-335.)

WASHINGTON:
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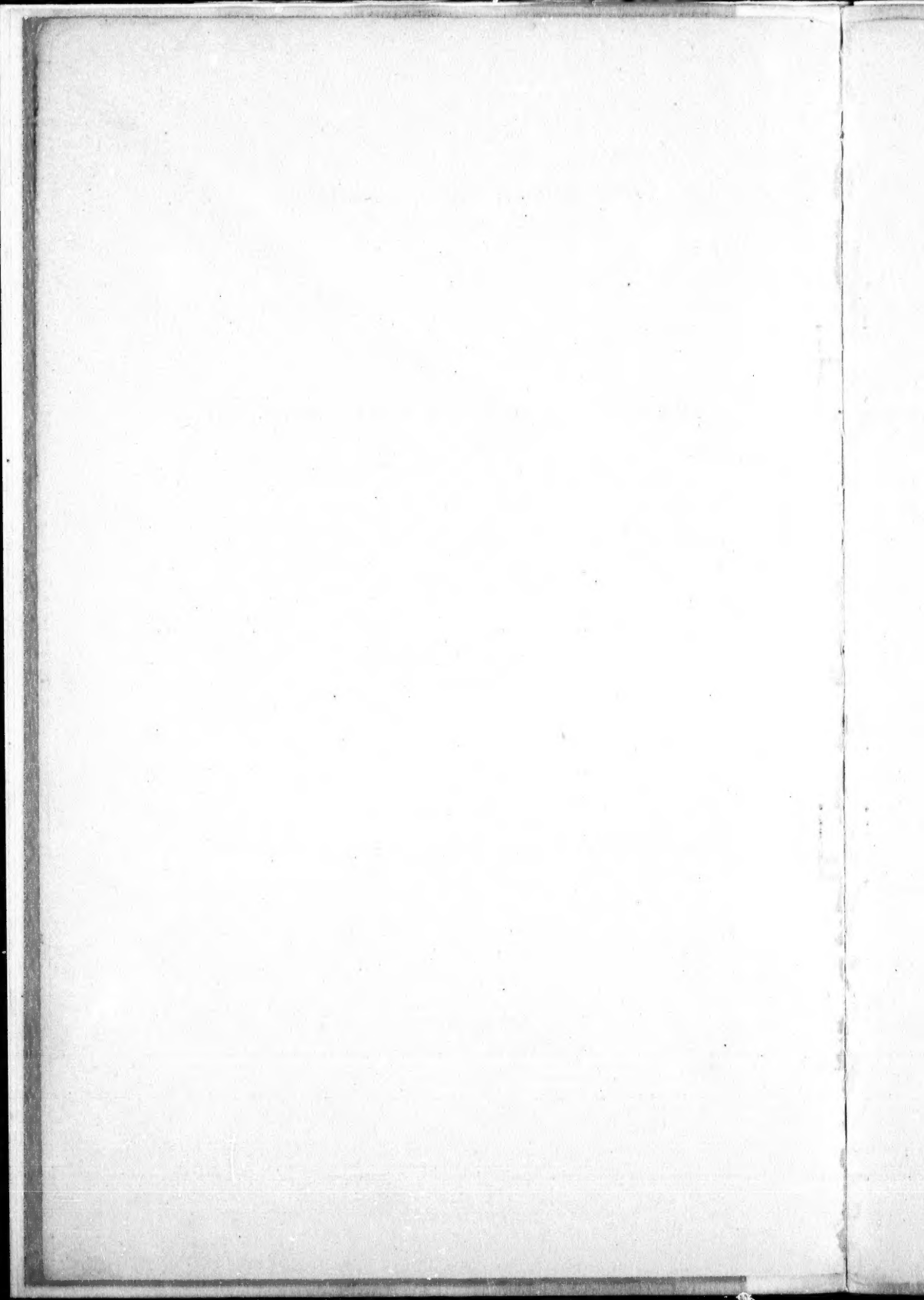
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From the end of the American Revolution the importance, and, indeed, the necessity, of preserving the friendship of the Indians of the Northwest was steadily kept in mind by the officers intrusted with the administration of Canada. The organization of the Indian department which had been formed during the war was carefully maintained. Sir John Johnson, whose family name was still a word to conjure with in the Indian world, was appointed superintendent, and Alexander McKee and John Butler resident deputies at Detroit and Niagara. No better choice could possibly have been made. McKee and Butler were men of great force of character and undaunted courage, whose long experience, consummate tact, and intimate knowledge of Indian customs and dialects had gained unrivaled influence. In 1787, when war seemed imminent, Lord Sydney, secretary of State, remarked in a dispatch that the treatment of the Indians had always been liberal, but as the security of the province might depend on their conduct the supplies to them should be augmented rather than leave them discontented.

Butler and McKee both died in 1796; the former was succeeded by Johnson's nephew, William Claus, and the latter by Matthew Elliot, who was remarkably well qualified for the post by experience, local knowledge, and influence.

In 1808, when war again seemed almost inevitable, Claus was sent by Lieutenant-Governor Gore to Amherstburg to ascertain the intentions of Indian tribes residing between the Ohio and Mississippi. On his arrival at that place he dispatched an interpreter to bring in the Shawanese chiefs and prophet, who took the lead in resisting the farther advance of settlers into the Indian territory. The chiefs obeyed the summons in

a body and the prophet sent a friendly message. In the meantime Claus conferred with several chiefs of the Chippewa and Ottawa "nations" who were decidedly reserved and noncommittal in their language. He concluded, on the whole, that they were certainly hostile to the Americans, but that unless they had a prospect of support from the British they would be "very backward." He estimated that the number of fighting men belonging to all the Indian tribes "on the waters of the Miamis, east borders of Lake Michigan, Sagana, and the interior of the country between those waters" did not exceed 1,500.

Elliot, who was better acquainted with the sentiments of these tribes, declared unhesitatingly that one regiment of British infantry would be sufficient to take possession of Detroit and the territory between that town and the Ohio, and in that event the Indians would at once become active allies, an opinion which Mr. Gore promptly discounted as much too sanguine.

The lapse of four years brought about a great change in the situation. The Indians had diminished in numbers and otherwise grown weaker, but more hostile to the American settlers, who had become far more numerous and aggressive. The population of Kentucky and Tennessee had doubled in ten years and then exceeded three-quarters of a million. An eager and adventurous host of 250,000 settlers had poured into Ohio. Fifty thousand more made their way into Illinois and Indiana in open defiance of the protests and threats of the dwindling and dispirited bands that had been pushed back to the banks of the Wabash.

There were unmistakable signs that the visions and the harangues of the Shawanese prophet and others were bearing fruit in the evident unrest and discontent among all the Western Indians. The American settlers declared, and apparently believed, that the spirit of hostility was largely due to British influence. In this they were certainly mistaken, although it would be useless to deny that the officers of the British Indian department sympathized strongly with the Indians and were sometimes indiscreet in expressing their opinions.

As early as 1808 the Seven Nations of Lower Canada were dissuaded by them from sending delegates to a great council near Lake Michigan that had been convoked by the prophet, and up to the last they seem to have spared no effort to avert a collision.

In a dispatch to Sir George Prevost dated December 3, 1811, General Brock said:

My first care on my arrival in this province was to direct the officers of the Indian department at Amherstburg to exert their whole influence with the Indians to prevent the attack which I understood a few tribes meditated against the American frontier; but their efforts proved fruitless. Such was their infatuation that the Indians refused to listen to advice, and they are now so deeply engaged that I despair of being able to withdraw them from the contest in time to avert their destruction. A high degree of fanaticism, which has been for years working in their minds, has led to the present state of affairs.

Yet when he wrote these words he was convinced that war with the United States was unavoidable, and deliberately contemplated seeking the assistance of the Indians in that event.

"But before I can expect an active co-operation on the part of the Indians," he continued, "the reduction of Detroit and Michilimackinac must convince that people (who consider themselves to have been sacrificed to our policy in the year 1794) that we are earnestly engaged in the war. The Indians, I am given to understand, are eager for an opportunity to avenge the numerous injuries of which they complain. A few tribes at the instigation of a Shawanese of no note have already (altho' explicitly told not to look for assistance from us) commenced the contest. The stand which they continue to make on the Wabash against about 2,000 regulars and militia is a strong proof of the strong force which a general combination of the Indians will render necessary to protect wholly so extended a frontier."

The dispatch from Lord Liverpool to the Governor-General of Canada, dated July 28, 1811, reiterating the instructions sent to his predecessor in office on the 2d of February to exert every means in his power to restrain the Indians from hostilities does not appear to have been received by Prevost until the following January; but he was then able to reply that the wishes of the cabinet in that respect had been fully anticipated, and an extract from Brock's letter, already cited, was at once forwarded to the British minister at Washington to be used as evidence of his pacific attitude.

A vague rumor of the battle at Tippecanoe had reached Elliot at Amherstburg as early as the 3d of December, 1811, but it was not until the 12th of January, 1812, that he obtained what may be regarded as the official Indian account of that affair:

Two young Winibiegos, no doubt out of curiosity (for it appears the Indians had no intention to attack but to defend themselves if attacked),

went near some of the American sentinels and were shot at and fell as wounded men, but on the sentinels coming up to dispatch them, they arose and tomahawked them.

This insult roused the indignation of the Indians and they determined to be revenged and accordingly commenced the attack at cockcrow. They had the Americans between two fires; driven by the Winibiegos they were received by the Kikapoos, alternately, till about 9 o'clock when the Indians gave way for want of arrows and ammunition. It appears that not above 100 Indians fired a shot, the greater part being engaged in plundering and conveying of horses.

The Indians asserted that they had less than 300 men in the field, belonging to seven different nations, and admitted the loss of only 25 in killed and wounded.

Replying about the same time to inquiries from Colonel Claus, Elliot assured him that "all the Indians, with the exception of a few stragglers of all the nations within the limits of your sketch, may be depended upon; the exact number of whom I can not give you, but the following is what I have been able to collect of those living from the St. Croix River to the Wabash, viz: Chippewas, 300; Nodouessies, 1,000 and upward (because there are 1,000 in one party); Saukies, 1,000 went against the Osages; Foxes, 1,000; Mashoutas, 500; Iowas, 200; Menominies, 300. The situation of their villages is out of my power to ascertain. The part of the country I was formerly acquainted with has entirely changed its face with its masters and the Indians have moved to other parts. The Ottawas of the Miami Bay and branches of that river and about Sandusky are about 300 men."

A considerable number of British traders were then domiciled near the Mississippi in the vicinity of Prairie du Chien, and Brock applied for information to Robert Dickson, the most influential of these, who had spent more than twenty years of an adventurous life in the exploration of the western country and with whom he appears to have previously discussed the subject.

A message to him was dispatched from Toronto on the 27th of February, 1812, by an Indian runner, and delivered early in June at the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, requesting him to state definitely the number of his "friends" who could be depended upon, and directing him to send down "a few faithful and very confidential agents." Dickson replied that "the unparalleled scarcity of provisions of all sorts" had reduced the number of his "friends" to 250 or 300, speaking several different languages, but that they were all ready to

march under a proper person commissioned for that purpose, and actually dispatched 79 warriors to Amherstburg on the very day of the declaration of war, and issued instructions for the remainder to assemble at St. Josephs on the 30th of June.

He does not seem to have taken any pains to conceal his intentions, for as early as the 24th of April, 1812, Ninian Edwards, governor of the Illinois Territory, informed the Secretary of War that "the opinion of the celebrated British trader, Dickson, is that in the event of a British war all the Indians will be opposed to us, and he hopes to engage them in hostility by making peace between the Sioux and Chippewas, two very large nations, and getting them to declare war against us."

Dickson asserted that he had found the agents of the American Government among the Indians extremely active, "making them unusual presents of goods and inviting them in the most pressing manner to visit the President of the United States at Washington." He spent about \$10,000 out of his own means in frustrating their efforts in the course of the spring and summer of 1812.

Everywhere the Indians were ripe for war owing to the failure of their crops for two years in succession, and the migration of game caused by excessive drought. They were, besides, bitterly exasperated by the refusal of some of the American officers to furnish them with supplies on credit, and Dickson confirmed his influence by distributing his entire stock among them and purchasing all the provisions he could obtain.

At the same time the Governor-General of Canada sought the assistance of the two great fur companies, upon whom so much of the prosperity of the colony at that time depended. The Northwest Company replied that they could control 250 engagés and from 300 to 500 Indians. The Michilimakinac or Southwest Company with equal readiness promised the services of 100 engagés and 300 Indians.

Prevost then endeavored to increase the efficiency of the Indian department, which consisted of a superintendent-general, 3 superintendents, and 14 interpreters, many of them very old men who had been in the service since the Revolution. With this object, on the 1st of May, 1812, he addressed a careful letter of instructions to Sir John Johnson, who was still superintendent-general:

You are to keep up friendly intercourse and communication with all the Indian nations, to preserve economy, regularity, and order,

As they consider themselves free and independent, they are to be governed by address and persuasion, and the utmost attention to ceremonies and external appearance, with an uncommon share of patience, good temper, and forbearance, and you are to instruct your officers accordingly. Upon the arrival of parties of Indians at any post the agent shall notify the commanding officer, who, with the officers of the garrison, shall assist in receiving them with every mark of solemnity and friendship. Their requests, if reasonable, are to be complied with. Should they lay down presents, they are to be taken up with thanks and given presents of greater value in return. Chiefs are also to be distinguished. When conferences are held by the agent the commanding officer is to preside and all the officers are to be present, but he is not to interfere with the agent in the management of the Indians. As they are curious and fond of news, the officers are to be cautious as to what they say and it should be told very distinctly, and agents should endeavor to make one or two sober and intelligent chiefs living at the posts their friends and confidants, and use them as their speakers and have them prompted in what the officer intends to say, this being a custom of the Indians with their own speakers. Minutes of the meetings are to be regularly kept. The agents are at all times to inculcate into the minds of the Indians principles of humanity and tenderness to prisoners, particularly on the departure of all parties during a war or when there is a probability of retaliating or resenting injuries sustained.

In all matters of trade in which Indians are concerned the utmost justice is to be done them. No person belonging to or employed in the Indian department is to be allowed to trade, directly or indirectly, or to have any share, profit, or concern therein. * * *

Every means is to be taken to prevent the pernicious practice of introducing liquors among them and every endeavor exerted to keep them perfectly sober.

The entire cost of the department for the year 1811 was £29,606, and, so far from exhibiting a large increase, as alleged by General Harrison, it was actually much less than in the preceding year.

The number of Indians actually residing in Canada, among whom most of this money was spent, was inconsiderable. The Seven Nations of Lower Canada, living at Caughnawaga and the Lake of Two Mountains, could muster about 500 fighting men; the Six Nations, at the Grand River, in Upper Canada, nearly 400, and the Mississaugas about the same number.

On the 8th of July Captain Roberts, the commandant of a British outpost on St. Josephs Island, received letters from General Brock announcing that war had been declared by the United States and suggesting an attack upon Mackinac. A day or two later he received instructions to suspend hostilities, and finally, on the 15th, a dispatch directing him to act as he thought proper. Dickson had come in with 130 Sioux,

Folles Avoines, and Winnebagoes from Green Bay, and M. Toussaint Pothier arrived from Montreal in the capacity of agent for the Southwest Fur Company. An express was sent to require assistance from the agents of the Northwest Company at Fort William, and on the ninth day after its departure they answered by their presence, bringing with them nearly 200 engagés. Amable Chevalier, an Ottawa chief of influence, who had recently returned from lower Canada to reside at L'Arbre Croche, volunteered his services and succeeded in assembling a considerable number of his tribesmen. Pothier observed that "they appeared very lukewarm, and after a great deal of prevarication reluctantly agreed to join the expedition. The other Indians were unanimous, particularly the Western Indians, whose animated example had great influence upon the others."

The garrison of Mackinac was absolutely taken by surprise and surrendered without resistance on the 17th of July. The Indians are stated to have behaved in the most exemplary manner. Captain Roberts wrote:

It is a circumstance, I believe, without precedent and demands the greatest praise for all those who conducted the Indians, that although these people's minds were much heated, yet as soon as they heard the capitulation was signed they all returned to their canoes, and not a drop of either man's or animal's blood was spilt till I gave an order for a certain number of bullocks to be purchased for them.

John Askin, an officer in the Indian department, declared that "since the capitulation they have not drunk a drop of liquor nor even killed a fowl belonging to any person (a thing never known before), for they generally destroy everything they meet with."

After the fall of Mackinac, Dickson returned to Green Bay to collect a larger body of warriors whom he dispatched to Brock's assistance, partly in canoes and partly overland. They arrived at Detroit too late to take any part in the military operations which led to the surrender of that place.

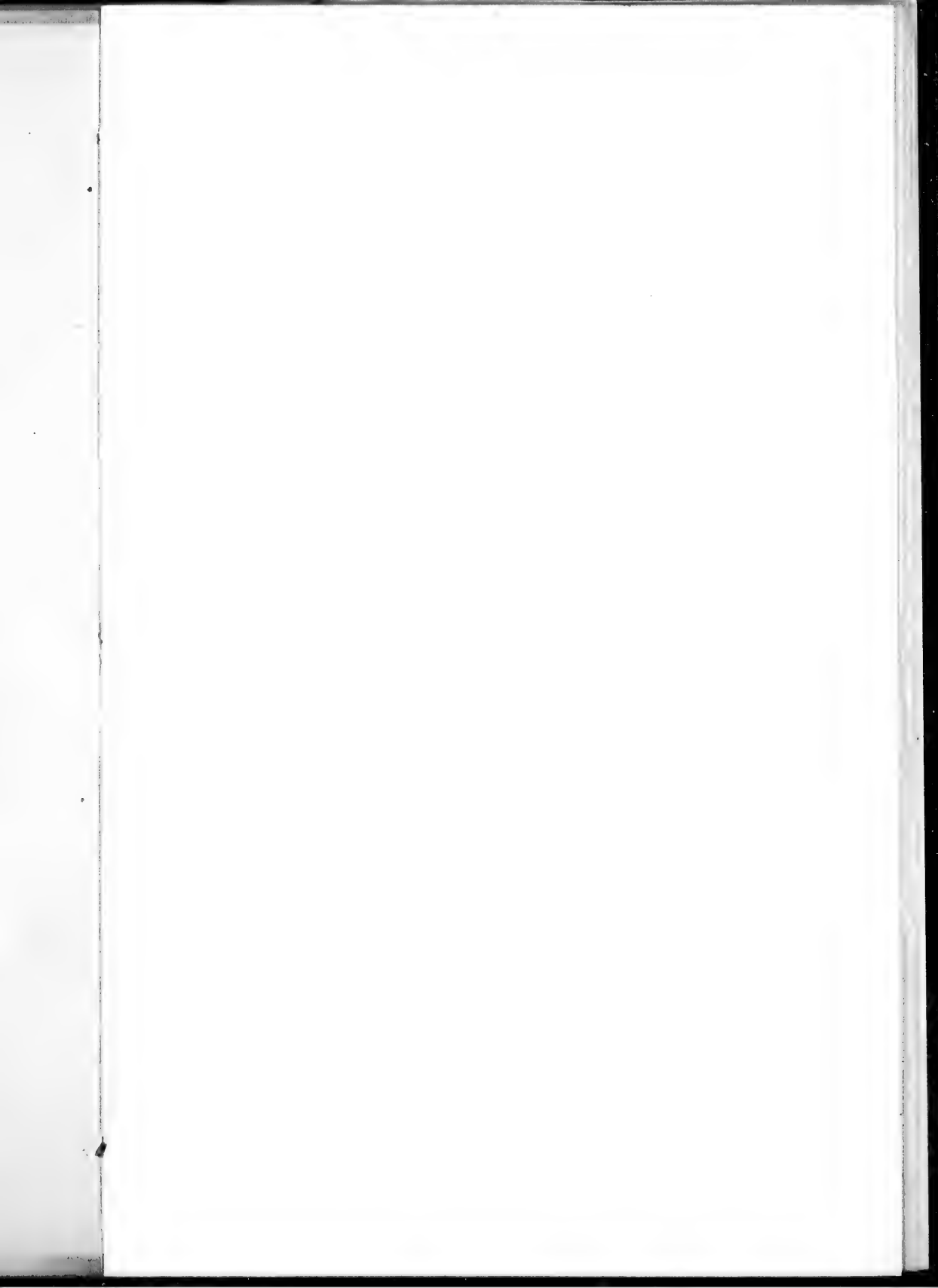
The Ottawas, however, continued to waver, and were even suspected of forming a conspiracy to seize Fort Mackinac and exterminate the British garrison.

During the winter Elliot had sent a message to the Indians on the Wabash urging them to desist from further hostilities, and about the 14th of June he received a formal reply from Techkumthai, the "Shawanese of no note" mentioned in Gen-

eral Brock's letter, who had collected 600 warriors, of 12 different tribes, at Machethie on the Wabash, about 60 miles from Fort Wayne. They had scarcely any ammunition for the fire-arms they possessed, and were busily employed in making bows and arrows in expectation of an attack.

The Shawanese chief replied: "You tell us to retreat or turn on one side should the 'big knives' come against us. Had I been at home in the late unfortunate affair I should have done so; but those I left at home (I can not call them men) were a poor set of people, and their scuffle with the 'big knives' I compared to a struggle between children who only scratch each other's faces. * * * We will now in a few words declare our whole hearts. If we hear of the 'big knives' coming toward our villages to speak peace we will receive them; but if we hear of any of our people being hurt by them, or if they unprovokedly advance against us in a hostile manner, be assured we will defend ourselves like men. And if we hear of any of our people having been killed, we will immediately send to all the nations on or toward the Mississippi, and all this island will rise like one man. Then, father and brothers, it will be impossible for you, or either of you, to restore peace between us."

The march of General Hull's army toward Detroit was closely watched by Tecumtha's scouts, who lurked in the woods and counted his troops as they passed. In the beginning of July he joined the British forces at Amherstburg with nearly 200 followers. Thirty Winnebagoes sent by Dickson from Green Bay also came in, but the Indians from Upper Canada, Ohio, and Michigan significantly held aloof. In the first letter Hull received from the Secretary of War, after his appointment to the command of the Northwestern army, he was instructed "to adopt such measures with the chiefs of the several tribes of Indians as may in your judgment appear to be the best calculated to secure the peace of the country." Evidence was not wanting that he had been at least partially successful in his efforts to secure their support. A letter from General Hull to the Secretary of War, dated at Fort Findlay, on June 26, was intercepted, in which he said: "I have with me a considerable number of chiefs and headmen of the different nations. * * * The friendly Indians are now making canoes, and will carry a part of the baggage of the army from this to the foot of the rapids."



The Indians in the British camp were represented as being eager for hostilities. On the 8th of July Colonel St. George wrote to General Brock:

I now think it fortunate that your letter of the 29th came too late to stop the messengers sent out to the distant Indians. On my return from Sandwich yesterday we had a grand council of chiefs, etc., from the neighborhood, and the usual ceremonies of the wampum, etc., were gone through. There were present about 200, and besides those present I am informed 100 had gone to their camp. Tecumtha (the prophet's brother) acted a conspicuous part on the occasion.

On the 15th he observed, "As to the Indians, I wished those here to act when I could support them; but as they are so anxious, I must let them on and sustain them as I see occasion to the utmost of my power." In the course of the same day Elliot reported that "the Indians with us are between 300 and 400, who have resisted every allurements which General Hull laid before them. Teckumthai has kept them faithful. He has shown himself to be a determined character and a great friend to our Government."

On the other hand, Hull asserted that the number of "hostile Indians" was daily diminishing, and took means to circulate widely his well-known proclamation in which he declared "that the first stroke with the tomahawk, the first attempt with the scalping knife, will be the signal for one indiscriminate scene of desolation. No white man found fighting by the side of an Indian will be taken. Instant destruction will be his lot."

Still he did not relax his efforts to gain the Indians over and even sent agents with a message to the Six Nations on the Grand River. Tarhè, the eldest chief of the Hurons, was summoned from Sandusky to exert his influence with his tribe, and on the 19th day of July Hull wrote to the Secretary of War, "I have now a large council of ten or twelve nations sitting at Brownstown, and I have no doubt the result will be that they will remain neutral."

Several chiefs of the Hurons were sent across the river to confer with Tecumtha and Roundhead, who had refused to attend this council. Both these chiefs, after a stormy discussion which in the usual Indian fashion continued for three days, declared their unalterable determination to take sides with the British, and after exhausting every argument in their power the baffled Hurons returned to Detroit.

The doubtful attitude of the Six Nations still gave General Brock great uneasiness. On the 3d of July he wrote:

About 100 Indians from the Grand River have attended to my summons; the remainder promise to come, but I have too much reason to conclude that the Americans have been too successful in their endeavors to sow dissension and disaffection among them. It is a great object to get this fickle race interspersed among the troops. I should be unwilling, in the event of a retreat, to have 300 or 400 of them hanging on my flanks. I shall probably have to sacrifice some money to gain them over.

Three weeks later, after learning that all but 50 had declined to join his forces and announced their determination of remaining neutral, he said:

The militia which I had destined for this service (the relief of Amherstburg) will now be alarmed and unwilling to leave their families to the mercy of 400 Indians whose conduct affords such wide room for suspicion, and really to expect that this fickle race would remain in the midst of war in a state of neutrality is truly absurd. The Indians have probably been led to this change of sentiment by emissaries from General Hull, whose proclamation to the Six Nations is herewith inclosed.

On the 25th of July, 22 Menominees routed a party of Ohio militia near Sandwich, and immediately afterwards a sudden change of sentiment became apparent among the Hurons residing in Michigan, which ended in a determination to join the British.

"On the 2d instant," said Colonel Proctor, writing to Brock on the 11th of August, "the Wyandots having at last decided on joining the other nations, of whom they are the bravest and eldest, against the Americans, a considerable body of Indians accompanied the chief Tecumseth to the village of the Wyandots (Brownstown) nearly 30 miles on the opposite shore from Detroit and 5 from hence. I sent a detachment of 100 men under Captain Muir to enable the Wyandots to bring off their families, cattle, and effects. This was effected, much to the disappointment of Mr. Hull, who has given them a considerable sum of money in the hope of retaining them in the American interest."

The Indians at once beset the communication with Ohio and a day or two later cut off a party with dispatches for General Hull. On the 5th of August 24 Indians, headed by Tecumtha and Capt. William Elliot, ambushed and dispersed the escort and Major Van Horne, capturing the mail from Detroit, which contained a great number of letters and documents revealing the demoralized state of the American army in the most forcible

ble manner. The importance of the information thus obtained was warmly insisted upon by Brock in justification of his conduct in advancing against Detroit. "I got possession of the letters of my antagonist addressed to the Secretary of War, and also of the sentiments of hundreds of his army uttered to his friends. Confidence in their general was gone and evident despondency prevailed. I crossed the river, contrary to the opinion of Colonel Proctor and others, and it is therefore no wonder that envy should attribute to good fortune what in justice to my own discernment I must say proceeded from a cool calculation of the pros and contras."

The possession of so much of General Hull's confidential correspondence also enabled Colonel Baynes to contest effectively the charge made by General Dearborn soon after, that the British alone had sought the assistance of the Indians in the war.

Describing his interview with the latter, Baynes said that "General Dearborn deprecated in strong language the employing the Indians in our contest and insinuated that the disposition originated with the British, and inferring that the conduct of America was free from that reproach. I refuted this insinuation by assuring the General that we were in possession of intercepted letters of General Hull affording indubitable proof that he had not only entered into engagements with Indian tribes, but had employed emissaries to endeavor to gain over those supposed to be attached to the British interest; that it was highly to be lamented, the necessity of employing such means, but as it was well known the disposition of these people would always lead them to take an active part, it was a matter of necessity to prevent their decision being in favor of our enemy."

The surrender of Detroit was followed by the evacuation of Fort Dearborn, at Chicago, and the massacre of many of the garrison, and the investment of Fort Wayne by the Indians of Illinois.

These events became known to Colonel Proctor, who succeeded Brock in command of the British forces at Detroit, about the 9th of September, when he wrote that "the garrison of Chicago has been taken by the Indians, partly by stratagem, more than a fortnight since, and I am sorry to say that the garrison, consisting of 50 men, and every other person excepting an officer and his lady, who were wounded, and a

trader, Kinzie, was killed. We had no knowledge of any attack having been intended by the Indians on Chicago, nor can they indeed be said to be within the influence of the superintendent. I have reason to believe that Fort Wayne has been invested by the back Indians, and if Colonel Elliot had not been totally unable, from lumbago, to ride so far, I should have required him to proceed for that place to restrain the Indians. He has, however, taken measures that I hope will have the desired effect."

A few days later Proctor decided to send a small force of regulars and militia to Fort Wayne, mainly to preserve the lives of the besieged garrison, but "the delay occasioned by the armistice prevented the attainment of one object of the expedition, which was the destruction of Fort Wayne; the other was effected by the enemy. I do not think," he added, "we shall have any credit for our good intentions, however."

Sometime in July, 1812, Erastus Granger, Indian agent for the United States in western New York, held a council with the Senecas at Buffalo and proposed that they should send 200 warriors to join the American army. This they declined to do, but agreed to send a deputation to the Grand River to dissuade those of the Six Nations residing there from joining the British forces.

On the 27th of the same month the Secretary of War wrote to General Dearborn inclosing a letter to Granger authorizing him to organize the Six Nations as a military force. Addressing the same officer a few days later, he said:

By letters received from Erastus Granger it appears that the young men of the Six Nations can no longer be restrained, and that in case of refusal on the part of the United States to accept their services they would join the Indians under the British standard. Mr. Granger has therefore been authorized, after every attempt to secure their neutrality has failed, to employ them.

Yet at a council held at Onondaga on the 29th of September the spokesman of the confederacy replied to a formal invitation to take part in the war in the following terms:

Having been told repeatedly by your agents to remain neutral we were very much surprised at the council held at the Buffalo Creek at being invited to take up the tomahawk. We are not unfriendly to the United States, but are few in number and can do but little, but are willing to do what we can, and if you say so we will go with your people to battle. We are anxious to know your wishes as soon as possible because we are afraid some of our men may disperse among distant tribes and be hostile to you.

The Buffalo Gazette records the arrival of 140 Seneca warriors at that place during the last week of September, and on the 9th of October Brock stated that "between 200 and 300 Indians have joined and augmented the force on the other side. Their brethren here feel certain they will not act with any spirit against us. So I imagine, if we continue to show a bold front; but in the event of a disaster the love of plunder will prevail and they will act in a manner most to be dreaded by the inhabitants of this country." Of his own Indian Auxiliaries he scornfully observed, "They may serve to intimidate; otherwise I expect no essential service from this degenerate race."

However, a small party of the Six Nations fought bravely in the British cause at Queenston, where they lost 14 killed and wounded.

In a dispatch dated the 10th of August, 1812, Lord Bathurst, who had succeeded Lord Liverpool as Secretary of State for the colonies, formally approved of the employment of Indians. "Had it been possible," he said, "to have induced the Indians to preserve a strict neutrality between the Americans and this country in the contest in which we may be engaged, the interest of humanity might have required that we should resign the benefit of an alliance with them and of their actual co-operation with us in the field. But I fear there can be little doubt, if we decline to employ them, we insure to ourselves all those evils from which we are desirous of exempting our enemies. Upon any principle of self-defense, therefore, we can not but be justified in conciliating them, and if they are determined to engage in the war, in employing them to promote our success. I can not too strongly impress upon you the necessity of keeping that control over them which may enable you to prevent the commission of those excesses which are so much to be apprehended and can not fail to bring discredit upon the power in whose service they are engaged. It would be desirable, if possible, to restrain them from acting at any time except under the immediate direction and guidance of some officers of the Indian department or others in whom they may place confidence and to whose command they may be induced to submit."

The correspondence of Sir George Prevost indicates that he made strenuous efforts to carry out these instructions in as humane a spirit as possible.

On the 7th of December, 1812, a circular was addressed

to all officers commanding posts upon the frontier, strictly enjoining them to restrain the Indians from the commission of any acts of cruelty, and concluding with the statement that "his excellency disapproves of any co-operation with the Indians not connected with the system of defense of the province."

In a subsequent letter to General Sheaffe, the adjutant-general said:

I am commanded to signify to you his excellency's desire that every precautionary measure may be taken throughout the district under your command to restrain the Indians whom it may be necessary to employ. Sir George Prevost is much averse to allowing the regular troops to be engaged with the Indians in any offensive operations, and it is his wish that in your communications with Colonel Proctor you will call his attention to this important subject and recommend to that officer a cautious line of conduct in this respect consistent with the preservation of the district committed to his charge.

Dickson received similar instructions on the 7th of January, 1813, when on the point of departure from Montreal for the far west:

In the policy to be strictly observed in your conduct toward the different tribes it is desirable that you should endeavor to conciliate them to act together harmoniously, that you should restrain them by all the means in your power from acts of cruelty and inhumanity, encouraging in them a disposition to preserve an alliance of friendship with their Great Father, the King of England.

On the 9th of February the governor-general said, in a letter to Colonel Proctor:

I earnestly recommend on all occasions a strict adherence to that control and restraint of the Indians that we may be enabled to repel the charges which have not infrequently, though falsely, been brought against our Government for resorting to the employment of them.

Again, addressing the same officer on the 1st of March, he returned to this subject:

You will explain to Norton and Roundhead in the most distinct terms the services the King expects from his faithful allies, the Indians, and assure them of His Majesty's entire reliance upon their zeal and courage in defending their best rights and preserving their future existence. Let them clearly understand the extent of the co-operation you can afford, consistent with the trust reposed in you, and above all recommend mercy in victory. The officers belonging to the Indian department must not be sparing in their efforts to restrain and control the Indians so that your achievements may be without stain.

Writing to General Sheaffe, on the 27th of March, he said:

I now come to that highly important part of your resources, the employment of Indians, some in aid of your precautionary measures of defense and others for making offensive demonstrations for the recovery of their usurped territory, the latter of which can not fail to act as a powerful diversion in your favor. In consideration, therefore, of the movement of the confederate nations from the Wabash to the River Raisin under Tecumseh, and of the expected arrival from the westward of several warlike tribes with Mr. Dickson, the aggregate of which will be formidable, I have decided on intrusting the management of those distant tribes of Indians to other hands than those which are at present employed in the Indian department at Amherstburg, and accordingly have appointed Mr. Robert Dickson deputy superintendent of the Indians in Michigan and the conquered territory, on account of the high opinion I entertain of his courage, his perseverance, his integrity, and his zeal for the service. The late instance of the intrigue by the Indian department, in the case of Norton, and the evidence it afforded of the want of proper subordination, have put me on my guard against their endeavors to thwart my designs or impede their progress because they are not to be executed by themselves, and induces me to recommend you to vest in Colonel Proctor sufficient authority to support Mr. Dickson in his organization of the Indians from the westward, and to check the prodigal expenditure of provisions, and to establish strict impartiality in the treatment they experience from us.

I can not too frequently repeat to you that having been under the necessity of availing ourselves of the Indians' assistance, it is desirable, on every principle of humanity and policy, that all practicable means should be adopted to soften the ferocity of their usual mode of warfare and to restrain them in it.

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From The Author to
The Rev. Canon Bull.

269. Bay St.

Hamilton / May 23,
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